

ZRA-219

Activity Center ZRA

Department of Planning and Zoning; Petitioner

Howard County Planning Board

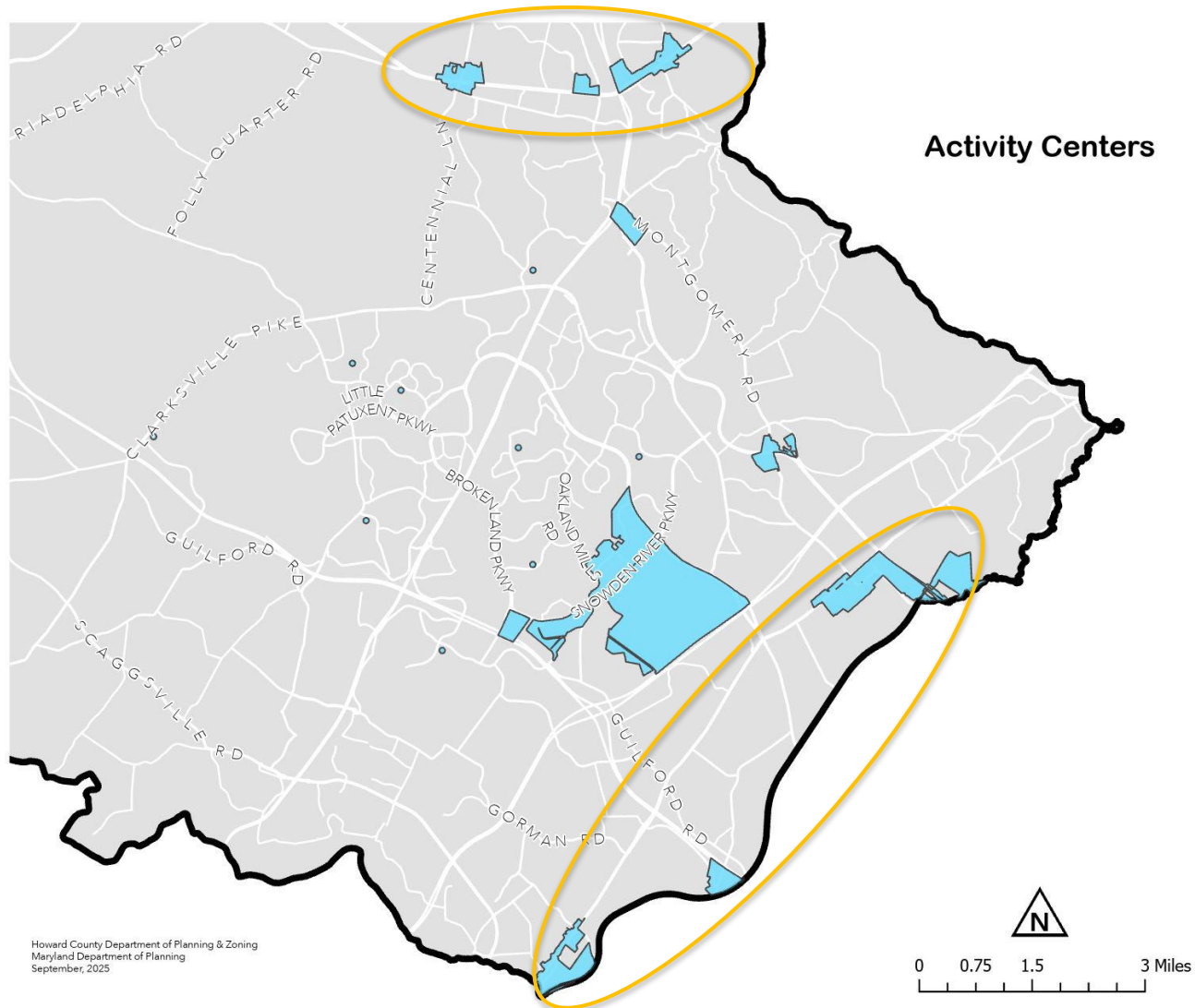
October 16, 2025



Purpose of ZRA-219

Promote diverse housing opportunities within Activity Centers in the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Traditional Neighborhood Center Overlay (TNC) zoning districts to align with the goals of HoCo By Design.

Activity Centers in the General Plan

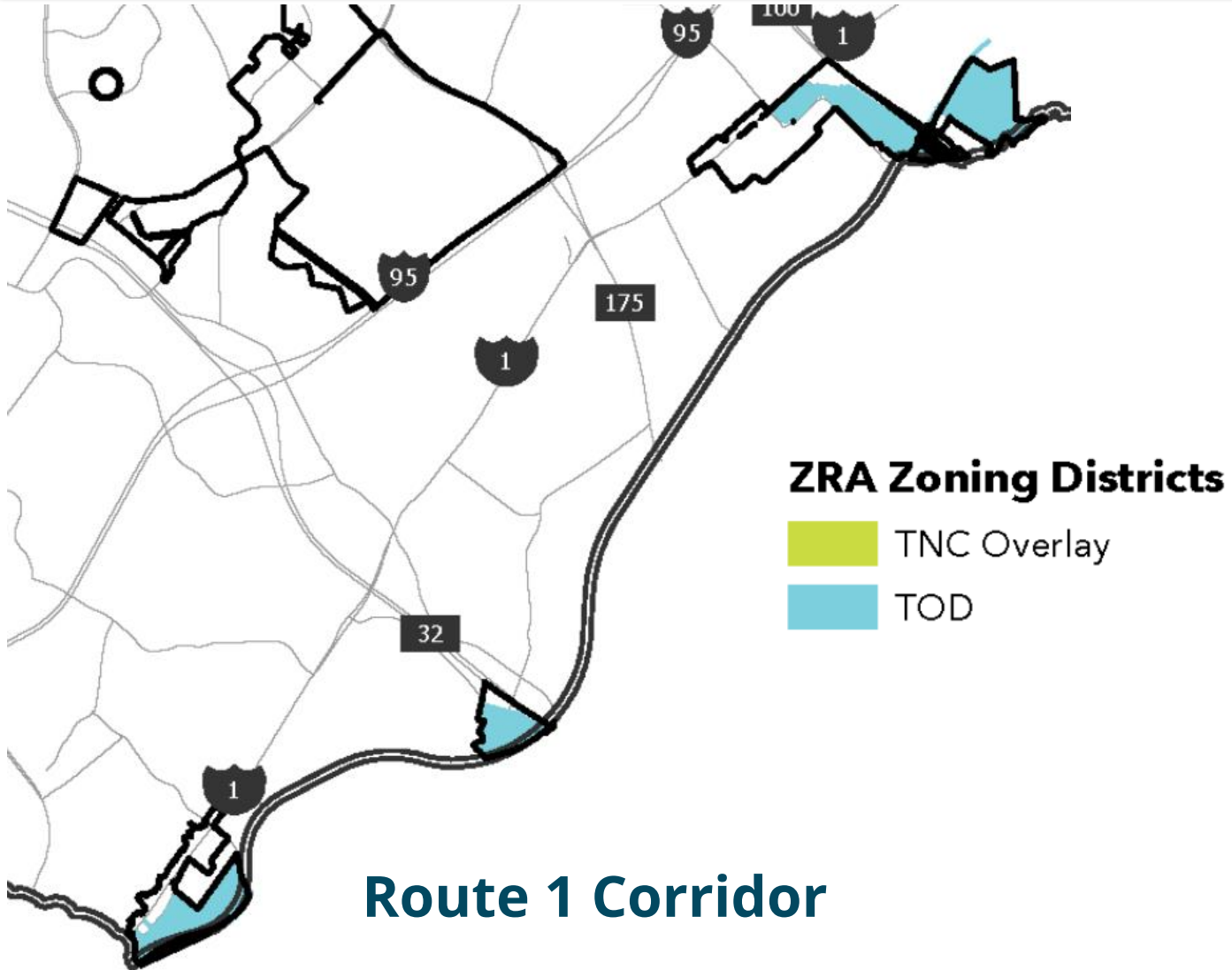


Activity Centers

As defined in the General Plan:
Places where housing and businesses are mixed together, usually in a walkable environment.

- The Plan guides the redevelopment of identified activity centers, which present opportunities for mixed-use development, mixed-income housing, small parks or community gathering spaces, increased stormwater management, and multi-modal transportation options.

Activity Centers – TOD & TNC



Summary of Proposed Changes

Activity Center ZRA – Companion Document

Definition or Use	What's currently allowed?	What's changing?	Code reference
Activity Center	Currently not defined	Add definition of Activity Center	103.0
Age-Restricted Adult Housing (ARAH)	- Permitted Use in the R-SI, CCT, TNC, POR, PSC, CEF - Conditional Use in RC, RR, R-ED, R-20, R-12, R-SC, R-SA-8, R-H-ED, R-A-15, R-APT, PGCC, B-1, B-2	- Add as a permitted use in TOD, subject to additional requirements. - Require ARAH developments in TOD and TNC that are 5 acres or greater to have more than one housing type, unless a hardship can be demonstrated.	127.4.B 127.6.B
Multifamily Dwellings, Apartment and Single-Family Attached	- Apartments Permitted Use in the R-SA-8, R-A-15, R-APT, R-MH, R-VH, HO, HC, CEF, NT, PGCC, MXD, PSC, TOD, CAC and TNC - SFA Permitted Use in R-ED, R-SC, R-SA-8, R-H-ED, R-A-15, R-MH, R-VH, HO, HC, CEF, NT, PGCC, MXD, P-SC, TOD, CAC, TNC	Require residential developments in the TOD and TNC zoning districts that are 5 acres or greater to have more than one housing type, unless a hardship can be demonstrated.	127.4.B 127.6.B

Proposed Text Change

- **Define “Activity Center” to align with the goals of the General Plan**

Activity Center: Targeted areas for growth identified in the Howard County General Plan, that promote opportunities for compact mixed-use development, diverse mixed-income for-sale and rental housing choices, small parks or community gathering spaces, employment opportunities, retail uses, and walking, biking, and transit options.

Proposed Text Change

- **Add age-restricted adult housing (ARAH) as a use permitted by right in the TOD district, subject to additional requirements.**
 - Allow ARAH to provide MIHU's at a different location or pay a fee-in-lieu.
- **TNC already permits ARAH, subject to the additional requirements listed in the POR zoning district.**
 - Remove reference to the POR and provide additional requirements in the TNC district.
 - TNC already requires 15% MIHU and open space.

ARAH Comparison Chart

ARAH Requirements - POR	POR	TOD	TNC
Design For Older Adults		Proposed with ZRA-219 Same language as POR	Proposed with ZRA-219 Same language as POR
Enforcement of Age Restrictions		Proposed with ZRA-219 Same language as POR	Proposed with ZRA-219 Same language as POR
MIHU Requirements	10% of all units	Currently codified 15% of all units	Currently codified 15% of all units
Community Center		Proposed with ZRA-219 Same language as POR	Proposed with ZRA-219 Same language as POR
Open Space (Amenity Area)	20% gross acreage	Minimum of 10% of the net site acreage. No amenity area shall be smaller than 0.25 acre.	Include a formal, landscaped, outdoor amenity area, such as a plaza, courtyard, square, or common that complies with Route 40 Manual.
Retail and Personal Service Uses	Are permitted, not required	TOD permits a mix of uses	TNC permits a mix of uses

Proposed Text Change

- **Require residential development projects on land 5 acres or greater to provide more than one housing type. ARAH housing can only provide apartments/multifamily and attached housing.**
 - One (1) housing type can be used if a developer demonstrates that the site has a unique physical condition that precludes compliance with the regulation.
 - Residential housing project with one housing type in existence prior to the effective date is not subject to nonconforming use requirements.

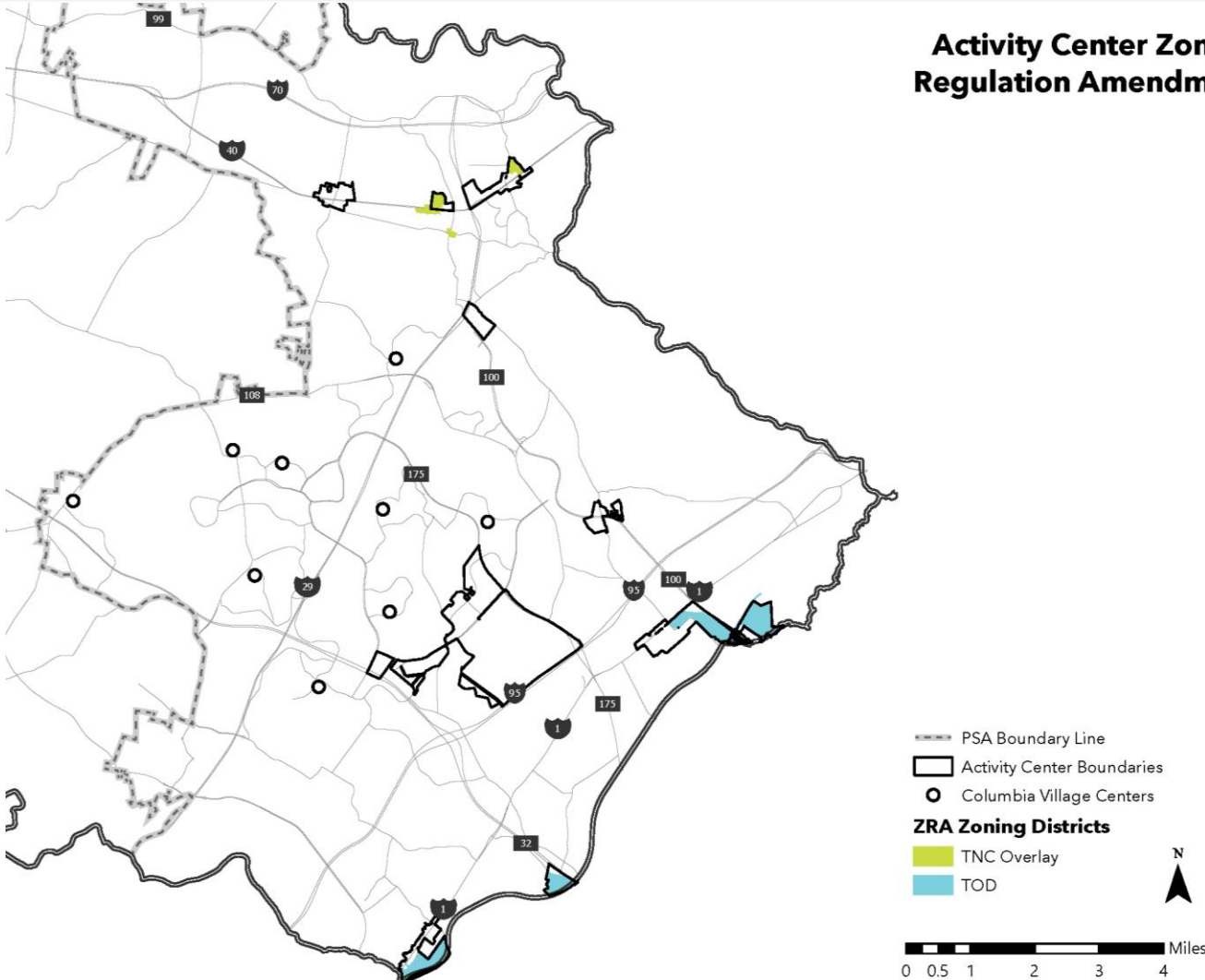
Evaluation of Criteria

1. The compatibility, including potential adverse impacts and consequences, of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the existing and potential uses of the surrounding areas and within the same zoning district.

- The proposed changes are not anticipated to produce adverse impacts on the uses of the surrounding area.
 - The TOD and TNC districts currently allow for residential developments on a certain acreage minimum, which the amendment would not change. The amendment is adding the provision of providing more than one housing type.

Evaluation of Criteria

Activity Center Zoning Regulation Amendment



2. The properties to which the Zoning Regulation Amendment could apply and, if feasible, a map of the impacted properties.

There is approximately 67 parcels and 451 acres where this amendment could apply.

- TOD: 63 parcels, 400 acres
- TNC: 4 parcels, 51 acres

Evaluation of Criteria

3. Conflicts in the Howard County Zoning Regulations as a result of the Zoning Regulation Amendment:

- Staff does not believe the amendment would create any potential conflicts.
- The amendment applies to projects submitted after the effective date.
- Projects 5 acres or greater that cannot provide more than 1 housing type due to unique physical site conditions have an opportunity to demonstrate a hardship.

Evaluation of Criteria

4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.

HoCo By Design (The General Plan) : The Dynamic Neighborhoods chapter supports providing attainable and diverse housing options.

- **HCBD DN-4** Policy Statement - “Activity Centers...should include a unique a mix of densities, uses, and building forms that provide diverse, accessible, and affordable housing options.”

Evaluation of Criteria

4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.

HoCo By Design (The General Plan) : The Dynamic Neighborhoods chapter supports providing attainable and diverse housing options.

- **HCBD DN-9** Policy Statement – “Create opportunities for multi-generational neighborhoods, especially in character areas identified as activity centers.”
- Implementing Action #1 – “Design new activity centers to accommodate the needs of various ages, abilities, and life stages.”

Evaluation of Criteria

4. The compatibility of the proposed Zoning Regulation Amendment with the Policies and objectives, specifically including the environmental policies and objectives, of the Howard County General Plan.

Environmental Policies

- The proposed ZRA-219 would not change any development requirements for sensitive resource protection, stormwater management or forest conservation.

Evaluation of Criteria

5. If the zoning regulation text amendment would impact eight parcels of land or less.

ZRA-219 impacts more than eight (8) parcels; therefore, this criterion does not apply.

Planning Board Recommendation

Planning Board Action:

Advisory – Make a motion on the proposed Zoning Text Amendment to the County Council

- Favorable recommendation of the regulatory text as proposed
- Favorable recommendation with suggested amendments to the regulatory text
- Non-favorable recommendation